

Soc 169C

Cross-Cultural Communication

John Kaiser, PhD
UC Berkeley
Fall 2022
Mondays 2pm-5pm
145 Moffitt Library

People embody and animate many types of cultures—ethnicity, nation, gender and sexuality, race, class, love, and many more—in our daily lives. Some of these cultural dynamics occur in subtle and subconscious ways that we take for granted. The relatively memorable cross-cultural experiences often stand out because they challenge our deeply-felt assumptions about what things mean. In either case, we usually do not systematically analyze or reflect on our cultural choreographies. And these unquestioned assumptions, ideologies, and identities can divide us and reproduce inequality.

People tend to avoid voluntarily immersing themselves in the kind of challenging social situations that prompt us to examine our core values, identities, and assumptions, some of which divide people along lines of “difference.” Yet such situations are essential for developing empathy and self-awareness of one's own ideological rationalization. In this era of retrograde ethnocentric nationalisms and evolving inequalities, direct interaction with our assumptions, privileges, and “cultural others” can lead to social and psychological transformation.

“Cross-cultural communication” invites students out into the field, where they participate in the social world of a particular culture that challenges their own assumptions and values. There, they practice a reflexive form of participant observation with the aid of a supporting curriculum. Lectures cover the practice of cross-cultural fieldwork, how social psychological processes shape values, beliefs, and behavior, how people use culture to rationalize inequality and privilege, and solutions for channeling the power of these processes to promote positive transformation.

Additionally, we explore, through lectures and discussions, the social construction of contested cultural spaces and the institutions and social structures that they animate. Specifically, we focus on ethnocentric nationalism, race, debates over abortion, political identity, social distancing, gun ownership, and marketing sex appeal. While exploring these topics, we will analyze our own experiences in relation to these social issues in our study of culture, self, and society.

Goals of this course include: 1) ability to describe and analyze social and cultural patterns; 2) ability to reflect on personal experience of cultural difference; 3) successfully engaging with one's “cultural others”; 4) developing empathy and minimizing ideological rationalization; and 5) developing self-awareness of one's own socially-constructed cultural subjectivity.

Although prior coursework in sociology is recommended, there are no prerequisites for this course.

Grading

Attendance and Participation	10%
Topic Presentation	10%
Project Proposal	5%
Cultural Self-Analysis	10%
Deep-description	15%
Field Notes	20%
Final Paper	30%

Attendance and Participation

This course is organized as a seminar. Seminars depend on the engaged and active participation of their members. Please bear in mind that the quality of that participation will be more important than quantity. Missing more than two classes may affect your grade. When you are present, you will be expected to participate in class discussions. Please be mindful of group dynamics so that everybody feels comfortable to speak up.

NOTE: you must be present on the day of your topic presentation or you will not receive credit for it (see below).

Assignments

Policy for Submitting Assignments: detailed instructions for each assignment will be posted on our bCourses website. All assignments must be submitted to bCourses by the deadline. Late assignments may not be accepted, and any late assignment that is accepted will be penalized a 1/3 of a letter grade (e.g. A → B+) for each 24-hour period that it is late (MAX penalty is three grades), beginning the minute after the deadline.

Although you may have a good reason for asking for an exemption from this policy, keep in mind that other students may have even more difficult circumstances but do not feel entitled or comfortable enough to ask. So, to avoid requests that might be perceived as unfair to your classmates, please do not ask for an extension.¹

NOTE: You should **submit your assignment before the deadline** in order to avoid any problems. Technical problems with bCourses are extremely rare, but if you are having a technical issue, take a screen shot of the error and email the instructor your assignment right away, before the deadline. If you fail to submit your work on time, it will be counted as late. Exceptions to the late policy will not be made for technical issues, so please do not ask.²

¹ If you have had an unforeseen emergency situation (e.g. serious illness, medical condition, family illness, care giving crisis) you may successfully request an extension if you provide supporting evidence with your request.

² The exception to this policy is an unusual and documented emergency beyond the student's control (e.g. serious illness, medical condition, family illness or caregiving situation) . If you have had an unforeseen emergency situation, you may request an exception or extension *if you provide adequate supporting evidence with your request*. Note that personal explanation alone may not be adequate.

Do not email your assignments to the instructor unless you have a problem uploading your assignment to bCourses, in which case you must email by the deadline or it will be considered late. Below is a brief description of each assignment. You will find detailed descriptions on bCourses, which you should read carefully.

The following is a simple overview. The detailed instructions will be available on bCourses/assignments.

Project Proposal

This short paper gives you a chance to reflect on your identity and values to figure out which cultural group you want to join for your project.

Topic Presentation

Students will prepare a creative and interactive group presentation on a social issue that involves conflicting cultural perspectives. These topics are marked with an "*" in the schedule below. Students will be assigned to topics. Let the instructor know in the first week of class if you will not be able to attend class on a particular day. Once the schedule is set, you will have to be attend class on the day of your topic presentation or you will not receive credit for it.

Cultural Self Analysis Paper

How does your personal culture(s) affect your current values, beliefs, and ways of communication? This paper is designed to allow you an opportunity to examine how your own cultural and social identities and history affect your identity. Your paper will be evaluated based on insightfulness, depth of reflection, detailed descriptions/examples, and your analytical approach.

Deep-description

This paper gives you a chance to analyze your fieldwork for significant themes. You will describe three aspects of the group's culture that you find significant, and you will provide specific examples from your fieldnotes to illustrate those themes.

Fieldwork and Fieldnotes

This project involves interaction with your chosen culture/group. This interaction, or "fieldwork", may take several forms, including participation online and research. We will discuss in detail on the first day of class. This fieldwork must equal at least two hours per week for 3 units and three hours per week for 4 units. Students begin field work by week 4 and continue through week 15, except for week 10 (spring break). A total of 10 weeks of qualifying field notes is required for full credit.

You will keep a journal of your experiences and observations. These fieldnotes are the foundation for your final paper and should be written immediately after your fieldwork each week. Fieldnotes for each session must be completed each week. You will also submit all of your field notes at the end of the semester. Students taking the course for 3 units must write at least 300 words per week; students taking 4 units must write at least 400 words per week.

Final Paper

This paper is the culmination of your semester-long project. It gives you a chance to process what you learned from the course and analyze your chosen cultural community in relation to course themes and your own subjectivity. It includes a reflective comparison of your culture with the community's culture and considers the role of cross-cultural communication in the cultural field. There is no final exam for this course, because the structure and content of the course requires assessment by final paper, and the final paper is designed to assess students' work in all areas of the course.

Project Presentation

On the final two days of class, students will share their experiences and projects by giving a semi-formal presentation. This is a chance to discuss each student's experience in depth and reflect as a group on what we have learned. This is also meant to be a fun way for people to learn from our class's diversity and each other's experiences with cultural difference. This counts towards your participation grade.

Reading

You are expected to have completed each week's reading as preparation for class attendance and participation. Always read analytically and take notes as you go. Come to class with questions and observations about what you found interesting, significant, puzzling, etc. If you do not read carefully and keep up, you might feel frustrated or disappointed with the course. When page numbers are listed next to a reading, you are only responsible for those pages.

Guidelines and Resources

Course Materials

All our readings will be available on bCourses, under "files," or through links on the syllabus (always use the syllabus on bCourses).

Office Hours and Email

My office hours are Wednesdays from 3pm to 5pm. If you cannot make that day/time, let me know so we can try to find a time that works for both of our schedules. Sign up [here](#). Here is the [Zoom link](#) for office hours.

My email address is: j_kaiser@berkeley.edu. I usually do not use email over the weekend, on holidays, or after hours. Please use my email, not bCourses to contact me. Do not reply to announcements on bCourses; email me instead.

This course has two Readers who will grade your assignments:

Sarah Ito sjito@berkeley.edu

Maddison Duffy mlduffy@berkeley.edu

If you have a question about your grade on an assignment, please email the person who graded it.

Formatting

All work should be formatted correctly. Familiarize yourself with MLA style formatting. Refer to The Purdue Owl Writing Lab.³ Then, note the following variations that we use in our course's modified MLA format style (see example at bCourses/files):

header containing the following information should be located in the top left corner and *single spaced*: name; course; number of units; due date
put your creative title **in bold** and centered above your first paragraph;
do not use a title page;
single space block quotations;
use 1" margins;
doubled-spacing (except for field notes, block quotations, and header);
use page numbers;
use 12-point Times New Roman font

Your assignments will be graded on how well they meet these, and other requirements, including content and delivery (see each assignment on bCourses for detailed information).

NOTE: Plagiarism is the presentation of another's words and/or ideas as one's own. It is grounds not only for automatic failure, but also for administrative disciplinary action. This also applies for other forms of academic dishonesty (a.k.a. cheating). Please see the Berkeley Campus Code of Student Conduct, Section III B, Academic Violations, and Section IV, Disciplinary Procedures.

Student Learning Center (SLC)

The SLC provides peer writing tutors. You are encouraged to make use of their services. You do not need an appointment. Find them in the Chavez Center (<http://slc.berkeley.edu>).

Accessibility Accommodations (DSP)

Students who have questions about academic accommodations should contact the Disability Students Program (DSP), 260 Cesar Chavez Center. Students who need academic accommodations should contact the Disability Students Program, 260 Cesar Chavez Center.

If you need disability-related accommodations in this class, be sure that the DSP has sent the instructor your letter. If your accommodations include extensions on assignments and you wish to make use of your accommodation for a particular assignment, you need to email the instructor before the deadline for that assignment. Since some of our assignments are due on Sunday you will automatically receive a 24 hour extension at the minimum (you still need to email me, though). When I come back to work, I will reply to your request. Extensions of more than three days may require input from your DSP advisor.

Once your DSP deadline is determined, it will be subject to the course policy for submitting assignments: no additional extensions will be allowed, and if you submit your assignment after your DSP deadline it will be subject to the course policy for late assignments. When you turn in your paper, indicate your DSP deadline in the comments section (e.g. DSP deadline: 4/20).

³ <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

Extensions on exams will be provided per each student's accommodations as stated in their DSP letter. Note that accommodations are not granted retroactively.

Course Schedule

This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor. Refer to bCourses for the current version (look in "files").

-----Week 1-----

August 29

Introduction to the Course

-----Week 2-----

September 5

Holiday (no class meeting)

-----Week 3-----

September 12

Orientation to Fieldwork and Approaches to Studying Culture

Miner, Horace. 1958. "Body Ritual among the Nacirema." *American Anthropologist*, Volume 58, Number 3 (June).

Eliasoph and Lichterman. 2003. "Culture in Interaction" (p. 735-746 and 773-776). *American Journal of Sociology*, Volume 108, Number 4 (January).

Sandstrom, et al. *Symbols, Selves, and Social Reality*. Ch. 1

Moon, Dawne. 2004. *Sex, God, and Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. "Doing Unto Others."

Project Proposal due Sunday

-----Week 4-----

September 19

Ethnographic Methodology and Subjectivity in Fieldwork

Emerson, Robert et al. 2011. "Fieldnotes in Ethnographic Research." *Writing Ethnographic Field Notes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press."

Tannen, Deborah. 1994. "The Pragmatics of Cross-Cultural Communication." *Applied Linguistics*, Volume 5, Number 3.

Ganguli, Prabarna. 2018. "Empathy and Bias Are Often More Intertwined than We Might Think." <https://massivesci.com/articles/empathy-bias-produce-groups-emotions/>

Bruneau, et al. "Parochial Empathy Predicts Reduced Altruism and the Endorsement of Passive Harm."

Interview with Deeyah Khan. <https://bit.ly/3aXnMqH>

Begin fieldwork this week

-----Week 5-----

September 26

***Ethnocentric Nationalism**

Taub, Amanda. "How a Sleepy German Suburb Explains Europe's Rising Far-Right Movements." <https://nyti.ms/2nr18jZ>
Gettleman, Jeffrey. "At Border of Two Nuclear-Armed Nations: Machine Guns, Anxiety, and Dancing." <https://nyti.ms/2RMPGMS>

-----Week 6-----

October 3

***Solidarity and Division**

Richards, Parker. "Make America Good Again."
Maisano, Chris. "The Liminal Left's Bid for Power."
Mounk, Yascha. "Americans Strongly Dislike PC Culture." <https://bit.ly/3wj20cN>

-----Week 7-----

October 10

***Abortion**

Cockburn, Andrew. "The Fight to Choose: the politics of abortion after *Roe v. Wade*"
Butler, Kiera. "God's Plan: Christian anti-abortion activists are gearing up to go after birth control."

Cultural Self-Analysis Paper due Sunday

-----Week 8-----

October 17

***Gun Ownership**

Pogue, James. "Arm the Left!"
<https://harpers.org/archive/2020/04/good-guys-with-guns-socialist-gun-club/>
Harmon, Josephine. "The Rise of the Conservative Legal Movement Reshaped gun politics."
<https://wapo.st/3QSXbib>

-----Week 9-----

October 24

***Relationship with the Land**

B. Toastie. "Klamath River Issues Explained."
Maher, Savannah. "Permission to Poach."
Gilio-Whitaker, Dina. "Environmental justice is only the beginning."

-----Week 10-----

October 31

***Competition**

McNulty, Tess. "Both Sides Now: Domination and abuse on the high school debate circuit."
Lyman, Eric. "How a Belief in American Exceptionalism is Making Americans Less exceptional."

-----Week 11-----

November 7

***Ability/disability**

Mingus. "You Are Not Entitled to Our Deaths: COVID, Abled Supremacy and Interdependence." <https://bit.ly/3Kewv97> -and- "Access Intimacy, Interdependence, and

Disability Justice" <https://bit.ly/34e6CDN> -and- "You Are Not Entitled to Our Deaths: COVID, Abled Supremacy and Interdependence" <https://bit.ly/3Kewv97>

Deep-description paper due Sunday

-----Week 12-----

November 14

Project Presentations

-----Week 13-----

November 21

Project Presentations

-----Week 14-----

November 28

Project Presentations

All field notes due 11:59pm Sunday, December 3

Final Paper due by 11:59pm, Monday, December 12. Late submissions may not be accepted, and if accepted, will be subject to the course policy on late assignments.